Meisel, Perry. The Cowboy and the Dandy: Crossing Over from Romanticism to Rock and Roll.

Literary and music critic Meisel (English, NYU) analyzes rock music's boundaries through the filter of literary criticism. To support his thesis that a circular relationship exists between Romantic and American culture (e.g., Oscar Wilde, Virginia Woolf, Willa Cather) and rock, jazz, and blues music (e.g., B.B. King, Chuck Berry, Louis Armstrong, the Beatles), Meisel alternates literary and musical chapters while drawing parallels between them. Unfortunately, his writing style—paragraph-length sentences full of words demanding a dictionary—is inaccessible and incomprehensible to all but the most persevering literary scholar and obfuscates an otherwise intriguing premise. Buy only for graduate-level academic literary collections.—Susan Hamburger, Pennsylvania State Univ., University Park

Merrill, Lisa. When Romeo Was a Woman: Charlotte Cushman and Her Circle of Female Spectators.

The subject of this fascinating and meticulously researched biography, Charlotte Cushman (1816–76), was one of the most acclaimed actresses of the American and British stages. Renowned for her portrayals of Lady Macbeth and Meg Merrilies, Cushman also enthralled and challenged her Victorian audiences with her gender-bending roles as Romeo, Hamlet, and Cardinal Wolsey. Merrill (communication and performance studies, Hofstra Univ.) has made use of Cushman's and her associates' diaries and letters to explore further the actress's romantic friendships with other women. Loyal to her mother and siblings, whom she supported financially, Cushman protected the family reputation by arranging for her adopted son (nephew) to marry one of her loves, Emma Crow of St. Louis. A significant contribution to lesbian/gay theater history, this book should have wide audience appeal and is recommended for public and academic libraries.—Howard E. Miller, M.L.S., St. Louis

Phillips, Mark & Cherry Lane
Music. Guitar for Dummies!. A Reference for the Rest of Us!

The "For Dummies" series has moved far from its humble beginnings as an auto repair manual in the late 1970s. This latest hefty offering suffers from trying to be too many things to too many readers. Certain-

ly, the introductory chapters are clear and concise, with enough information to get the beginner started. But it's not clear whether the book is geared toward electric or acoustic guitar—the photo illustrations show chords played on an electric guitar while the reader is learning campfire songs. Acoustic guitarists don't make an appearance until Chapter 12. Four additional chapters are devoted to guitar selection, maintenance, and accessories, items beyond the immediate interest of most beginning players. Libraries are already likely to have any number of beginning guitar books, and these need not be displaced. (CD not available for review.)—Eric C. Shong, Brown Univ. Lib., Providence

Rice, John A. Antonio Salieri and Viennese Opera.

Salieri's place in music history may have been permanently influenced by the film Amadeus, in which he is one-dimensionally portrayed as Mozart's less-talented nemesis. Now musicologist Rice, author of numerous articles on 18th-century music, has contributed a magnificent study of the complex musical and social circles that flourished at the court of Emperor Joseph II. Richly detailed and copiously footnoted, Rice's book masterfully interweaves three strands of scholarship: biographical information, an overview of the traditions and conventions of Viennese opera during the latter half of the century, and a close examination of several of Salieri's own operas. This last thread is perhaps the most valuable, as much for its use of previously unpublished sources as for Rice's perceptive and illuminating comments. The chapter "Mozart and Salieri" is a triumph of reasoned, careful research over unsupported Hollywood hype. This important book fills a conspicuous gap in musical scholarship and is enthusiastically recommended for all public and academic libraries.—Larry A. Lipkis, Moravian Coll., Bethlehem, PA

Philosophy


To many, Baudrillard's writings are too abstract to comprehend and analyze; to some, they resemble poetry more than philosophical texts. Whatever one thinks of the man and his work, he is arguably one of the most controversial and stimulating contemporary French philosophers. This book, a series of interviews with him, can indeed be an effective way—especially for the novice reader—of his work—to get an idea of his philosophy. The seven chapters cover various political, cultural, and philosophical issues ranging from the New World Order, Bosnia, and the Gulf War to Holocaust denial, human rights, and the nature of capitalism. Baudrillard's philosophy centers on the criticism of traditional critical thinking. His thesis is that we live in an illusion, or a "hyperreality," where reality is the illusion of truth. His diagnosis of contemporary issues and events sheds light on that philosophical thinking, which is identified with the post-Marxist intellectual Left. Highly recommended for academic collections.—Ali Houts, Cornell Univ., Ithaca, NY


Heidegger devoted much of his philosophical writing to poetry, particularly to the work of Hölderlin. He maintained that the poets he studied had grasped Being, in a way that the philosophical tradition since the pre-Socratics had forgotten. Froment-Maurice endeavors to explicate this striking claim. In his labyrinthine analysis, he devotes careful attention to the ancient Greek view of political action. The book concludes with a discussion of Heidegger's visit to Greece. This study is of principal interest to specialists in Heidegger, who will find it valuable and perceptive.—David Gordon, Bowling Green State Univ., OH

Singer, Beth J. Pragmatism, Rights, and Democracy.

Presupposing that individuality and community are independent, Singer rejects some traditional rights theories and argues that the shared perspective of community grounds individual rights and generates conflict resolution. She sees rights, whether legal or moral, as social institutions arising from community norms rather than as inhering in human nature. After offering her own theory, previously discussed in earlier works like Operative Right (SUNY, 1993), she examines the views of Rousseau, Mill, and T.H. Green on human rights and those of Eweey and G.H. Mead on the relationship between rights and the democratic process. She discusses the work of a wide variety of social and political philosophers and applies her own theory to issues concerning minority rights, multiculturalism, community authority and individual autonomy, the politics of federalism, and so forth. Recommended.—Robert Hoffman, York Coll., CUNY

110

LIBRARY JOURNAL/DECEMBER 1998